



EMERGING

EXPERIENCED

EXPERT



PRINT, INTERRUPTED

Where are You on Your Journey to Digital Maturity?

Maturity can be defined in many ways for a training organization. There's maturity in the sense of tenure and respect within your organization, as well as maturity in the sense of trainees taking your information and applying it to their jobs. There's even maturity in recognizing you have a lot of areas in which you need to grow.

But what about your digital content program? There is a path to maturity that will let you progress nicely along without getting overwhelmed with all the options—shiny, fun new technology—available to you. There is a way to plan a digital content maturity path that will eventually lead to impactful and engaging training methods.

To begin you need to take stock of your current training efforts. Some key questions to ask yourself include:

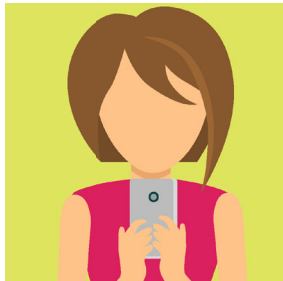
- Are you still using print manuals?
- Do you have a learning management system (LMS) but only use it to assign certain people certain training?
- Can your learners gain access to their content offline?
- How much of the of the digital functionality that is available today have you incorporated into your training?



LEARNER PATH

The first critical step, if you aren't already there, is to get your content online. Digital content is imperative in today's learning environment. Print is expensive and hard to keep up-to-date but also today's learners expect to digest their training information as they do other information in their everyday lives, digitally and on the go. There are statistics to back this up:

TODAY'S LEARNER:



Checks their **smartphone nine times an hour**

Uses **2+ devices a day**

Uses a **mobile device for learning** (67% of learners)

Wants to **learn at the point of need** (52% of learners)

*Penfold, Steve "Profile of the Modern Learner" Elucidat Blog
June 7, 2016*

That first critical step can consist of simply posting PDFs online for your users. A next step that continues you down the path to digital maturity is to make the PDFs interactive. Can your learners highlight and share notes? Can they search the content? Do they have access to definitions? How about bookmarks so that they can keep their place and come back later? The more that learners are engaged with your content, the easier it is for them to comprehend and apply critical training information.

One of the hallmark indicators of digital maturity is the addition of learner collaboration or a social learning environment. A 2015 eLearning Guild survey of their members found that "over 70% of respondents found or sought information on their own initiative...Not only does it confirm the significant frequency of informal learning, it demonstrates that informal learning shows up in many ways: e-Learning, traditional book study, social learning, and experience." By having a digital content system that allows for different types of informal learning, you will be giving the learners a tool that emphasizes and promotes the way they already prefer to learn.



ADMINISTRATIVE PATH

These are the key pieces to achieving digital maturity in the learner experience—but what about the administrative side?

EMERGING



At the beginning of the journey for an administrator, you should at least secure your high-value content. When there is value attached to your content—whether monetary or proprietary—it needs to be protected. There will be real dollars at risk if your content is compromised. Digital provides a much safer avenue than print for distribution.

EXPERIENCED



An example of a midway point to digital content maturity is security and digital rights management (DRM). This is a more advanced security solution beyond simply ensuring your content is delivered to the correct person. DRM prevents unauthorized redistribution of your digital content and enables you to turn permissions on and off at the individual or group level. You can easily see who is accessing your content and how. With print, you have no idea if someone misplaces or photocopies a binder to pass along to an unauthorized user. With digital content, you can tell how many pages are printed out of a document and even limit the number of pages a user can print.

Another question to address at this stage: Are you presenting the right content to the right people at the right time? Is it presented in a sensible way that can be followed? When you have a lot of training content to share, you need to make sure that it is curated and organized so that your learners can progress at a measured and purposeful pace.

Also at this stage in the maturity path the administrator should only be dealing with a single sign-on, meaning all outside vendors should be integrated into your LMS if you have one. Without seamless integration your data will be in different places. How can you easily measure impact without having access to your data in one location?

Are you presenting the right content to the right people at the right time? Is it presented in a sensible way that can be followed?

Evaluating the effectiveness of training has always been important. “Reporting and Analytics” were found to be the most important characteristics to support an extended learning system (Brandon Hall Extended Enterprise Study, 2017). Depending on what type of analytics are gathered depends on what you do with the data. To measure true learner engagement, you need to know how they’re interacting with your content. Are they reading/viewing it? Are they interacting—passing assessments, highlighting notes, or sharing with colleagues?

Access and content version control is also important. With less than half of today’s learners located onsite at an organization and almost 30% of learning occurring outside physical walls (Brandon Hall Extended Enterprise Study, 2017), mobile and offline access is imperative to your training goals. You need to consider the folks in the field that may be in a warehouse, basement, or just beyond the reach of a cell tower but need your content for reference. Mobile allows for learning and reference during a public transportation commute or spontaneous collaboration among peers. Even if you still utilize a classroom, your learners should be able to utilize your content when necessary beyond the classroom.

EXPERT



Today’s learning leaders face many challenges. Among them is making a consistent learning experience across different modalities and evaluating effectiveness (2016 & 2017 Training Industry, Inc. research data, n=779). Through a higher level of digital maturity, you can deliver your content instantly via the internet or an app downloaded to your users’ mobile devices or desktops. By having the flexibility of these different points of access, you know that your learners can delve into your content anytime, anywhere they’d like—and it’s the same content regardless of device or method.

Also present at this stage in digital content maturity are “learning paths”. Learning paths ensure that a flow of content can be established in a sensible order. A further step would be the ability to insert assessments at any stage to check comprehension of the content as presented. Assessments are an important piece of comprehension measurement. Otherwise you are simply delivering content and hoping that it’s understood without any real sense if it is or not. Embedding assessments in your content means that you are that much further along in your digital content maturity.

The ability to upload any file type is also a mark of digital maturity. Learning through digital content does not necessarily mean that you’re reading a page off a device. It could mean watching a video, taking an assessment, or listening to a podcast. Today’s thinking is it’s more about how content is presented versus the way a learner takes in the information. Certain content calls for certain presentation type. Today, digital content delivery systems are moving towards more of a “playlist” type of delivery of content, no matter the type, and includes commenting and socialization tools. This type of content presentation, plus a layer of a truly personalized, adaptive training experience is what is considered the most mature level of digital content delivery.

DIGITAL CONTENT MATURITY FRAMEWORK

This maturity framework shows the steps in how to achieve a complete digital content solution. It provides you the information needed to justify to decision makers that there is a plan for the journey. Speed of growth will depend on budget, integration, and adaptability of the continuing improvement along your digital journey.

	EMERGING	EXPERIENCED	EXPERT
CONTENT FORMAT	Print/PDFs	SCORM, Virtual Instructor Led Training (VILT), video	HTML5, EPUB, interactive video
ASSESSMENTS	Manual evaluations	Standard digital inquiry	Advanced digital simulations
CONTENT SECURITY	Read-only locked PDFs	Digital Rights Management (DRM)	Access to content is granted to credentialed, individual users
CONTENT MANAGEMENT	Not organized or contextual	Curated and organized	Content is distributed on a set path. Content is gated at each level.
LEARNER ENGAGEMENT	All devices, Online/Offline Access, Mobile	Learning Tools: Highlights, Note Sharing, Bookmarking	Social and adaptive learning experiences
ANALYTICS	Data dump with .csv export	Dashboard with engagement data	Engagement with outcomes and recommendations
TECHNOLOGY	Email	LMS, online e-reader	API integrations, mobile apps



LEARN MORE get.vitalsource.com

VitalSource® is a global leader in creating and securely delivering high-value content. VitalSource offers technology, enterprise-level scalability, and industry-leading analytics. Engage a new generation of knowledge workers with our millennial-friendly and technology-forward training platform that allows you to create, manage and analyze your learning content. VitalSource offers simple solutions for progressive learning environments.

Follow us on Twitter @vitalsource.